



**Billing Code 3510-22-P**

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

**RIN 0648-XE458**

**Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska; Central Gulf of Alaska Rockfish Program**

**AGENCY:** National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

**ACTION:** Notification of standard prices and fee percentage.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS publishes the standard ex-vessel prices and fee percentage for cost recovery under the Central Gulf of Alaska Rockfish Program. This action is intended to provide participants in a rockfish cooperative with the standard prices and fee percentage for the 2015 fishing year, which was authorized from May 1 through November 15. The fee percentage is 3.0 percent. The fee liability payments were due from each rockfish cooperative by February 15, 2016.

**DATES:** Effective [*INSERT DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER*].

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Keeley Kent, 907-586-7228.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

**Background**

The rockfish fisheries are conducted in Federal waters near Kodiak, AK, by trawl and longline vessels. Regulations implementing the Central Gulf of Alaska (GOA) Rockfish Program (Rockfish Program) are set forth at 50 CFR part 679. Exclusive

harvesting privileges are allocated as quota share under the Rockfish Program for rockfish primary and secondary species. The rockfish primary species are northern rockfish, Pacific ocean perch, and dusky rockfish. In 2012, dusky rockfish replaced the pelagic shelf rockfish species group in the GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications (77 FR 15194, March 14, 2012). The rockfish secondary species include Pacific cod, rougheye rockfish, shortraker rockfish, sablefish, and thornyhead rockfish. Rockfish cooperatives began fishing under the Rockfish Program on May 1, 2012.

The Rockfish Program is a limited access privilege program established under the provisions of section 303A of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA). Sections 303A and 304(d) of the MSA require NMFS to collect fees to recover the actual costs directly related to the management, data collection and analysis, and enforcement of any limited access privilege program. Therefore, NMFS is required to collect fees for the Rockfish Program under sections 303A and 304(d)(2) of the MSA. Section 304(d)(2) of the MSA also limits the cost recovery fee so that it may not exceed 3 percent of the ex-vessel value of the fish harvested under the Rockfish Program.

### **Standard Prices**

NMFS calculates cost recovery fees based on standard ex-vessel value price, rather than actual price data provided by each rockfish cooperative quota (CQ) holder. Use of a standard ex-vessel price is allowed under sections 303A and 304(d)(2) of the MSA. NMFS generates a standard ex-vessel price for each rockfish primary and secondary species on a monthly basis to determine the average price paid per pound for all shoreside processors receiving rockfish primary and secondary species CQ.

Regulations at § 679.85(b)(2) require the Regional Administrator to publish rockfish standard ex-vessel values during the first quarter of each calendar year. The standard prices are described in U.S. dollars per pound for rockfish primary and secondary species CQ landings made during the previous year.

### **Fee Percentage**

NMFS assesses a fee on the standard ex-vessel value of rockfish primary species and rockfish secondary species CQ harvested by rockfish cooperatives in the Central GOA and waters adjacent to the Central GOA when rockfish primary species caught by a cooperative are deducted from the Federal total allowable catch. The rockfish entry level longline fishery and opt-out vessels are not subject to cost recovery fees because those participants do not receive rockfish CQ. Specific details on the Rockfish Program's cost recovery provision may be found in the implementing regulations set forth at § 679.85.

NMFS informs—by letter—each rockfish cooperative of the fee percentage applied to the previous year's landings and the total amount due. Fees are due on February 15 of each year. Failure to pay on time will result in the permit holder's quota share becoming non-transferable and the person will be ineligible to receive any additional quota share by transfer. In addition, cooperative members will not receive any rockfish CQ the following year until full payment of the fee liability is received by NMFS.

NMFS calculates and publishes in the **Federal Register** the fee percentage in the first quarter of each year according to the factors and methods described in Federal regulations at § 679.85(c)(2). NMFS determines the fee percentage that applies to landings made in the previous year by dividing the total Rockfish Program management,

data collection and analysis, and enforcement costs (management costs) during the previous year by the total standard ex-vessel value of the rockfish primary species and rockfish secondary species for all rockfish CQ landings made during the previous year (fishery value). NMFS captures the actual management costs through an established accounting system that allows staff to track labor, travel, contracts, rent, and procurement. Fee collections in any given year may be less than, or greater than, the actual management costs and fishery value for that year, because, by regulation, the fee percentage is established in the first quarter of the calendar year based on the management costs and the fishery value of the previous calendar year.

Using the fee percentage formula described above, the estimated percentage of management costs to value for the 2015 calendar year is 3.3 percent of the standard ex-vessel value; except the rockfish fee percentage amount must not exceed 3.0 percent pursuant to MSA section 304(d)(2)(B). Therefore, the 2015 fee liability percentage is set at 3.0 percent. The fee liability percentage for 2015 remains the same as the 2014 fee liability percentage (80 FR 6053, February 4, 2015). Management costs were similar between 2014 and 2015, with slightly increased costs attributable to software upgrades needed to maintain the catch accounting system.

**Table 1. Standard Ex-Vessel Prices by Species for the 2015 Rockfish Program Season in Kodiak, Alaska.**

| Species         | Period ending  | Standard ex-vessel price per pound |
|-----------------|----------------|------------------------------------|
| Dusky rockfish* | May 31 .....   | \$0.16                             |
|                 | June 30.....   | \$0.18                             |
|                 | July 31.....   | \$0.17                             |
|                 | August 31..... | \$0.17                             |

|                     |                   |        |
|---------------------|-------------------|--------|
|                     | September 30..... | \$0.17 |
|                     | October 31.....   | \$0.17 |
|                     | November 30.....  | \$0.17 |
| Northern rockfish   | May 31 .....      | \$0.15 |
|                     | June 30.....      | \$0.17 |
|                     | July 31.....      | \$0.16 |
|                     | August 31.....    | \$0.18 |
|                     | September 30..... | \$0.16 |
|                     | October 31.....   | \$0.17 |
|                     | November 30.....  | \$0.26 |
| Pacific cod         | May 31 .....      | \$0.28 |
|                     | June 30.....      | \$0.27 |
|                     | July 31.....      | \$0.27 |
|                     | August 31.....    | \$0.31 |
|                     | September 30..... | \$0.27 |
|                     | October 31.....   | \$0.27 |
|                     | November 30.....  | \$0.30 |
| Pacific ocean perch | May 31 .....      | \$0.19 |
|                     | June 30.....      | \$0.19 |
|                     | July 31.....      | \$0.18 |
|                     | August 31.....    | \$0.17 |
|                     | September 30..... | \$0.19 |
|                     | October 31.....   | \$0.19 |
|                     | November 30.....  | \$0.19 |
| Rougheye rockfish   | May 31 .....      | \$0.23 |
|                     | June 30.....      | \$0.22 |
|                     | July 31.....      | \$0.18 |
|                     | August 31.....    | \$0.17 |
|                     | September 30..... | \$0.15 |
|                     | October 31.....   | \$0.15 |
|                     | November 30.....  | \$0.17 |
| Sablefish           | May 31 .....      | \$2.63 |
|                     | June 30.....      | \$2.68 |
|                     | July 31.....      | \$2.76 |
|                     | August 31.....    | \$3.57 |
|                     | September 30..... | \$2.67 |
|                     | October 31.....   | \$4.56 |
|                     | November 30.....  | \$2.96 |
| Shortraker rockfish | May 31 .....      | \$0.16 |
|                     | June 30.....      | \$0.20 |
|                     | July 31.....      | \$0.15 |
|                     | August 31.....    | \$0.15 |
|                     | September 30..... | \$0.15 |
|                     | October 31.....   | \$0.18 |
|                     | November 30.....  | \$0.17 |
| Thornyhead rockfish | May 31 .....      | \$0.31 |

|  |                   |        |
|--|-------------------|--------|
|  | June 30.....      | \$0.35 |
|  | July 31.....      | \$0.35 |
|  | August 31.....    | \$0.40 |
|  | September 30..... | \$0.33 |
|  | October 31.....   | \$0.59 |
|  | November 30.....  | \$0.67 |

\*The pelagic shelf rockfish (PSR) species group has been changed to “dusky rockfish.”

**Authority:** 16 U.S.C. 773 *et seq.*; 1801 *et seq.*; 3631 *et seq.*; Pub. L. 108-447;

Pub. L. 111-281.

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Emily H. Menashes,

Acting Director,

Office of Sustainable Fisheries,

National Marine Fisheries Service.

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